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Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter
Volume 78 • No.6 June 1996

The Gull

California Least Tern Threatened with Extinction

**Back Yard Birder
Galapagos - Final Call**
page 50

**Back Yard Balcony
Birders**
page 51

Observations
page 52

**GGAS Web Site
New Wetland at PRNS**
page 53

**Field Trips Calendar
Field Trips Coordinator
Panama Committee
News**
page 54

Breeding Bird Atlas
Back Page

You've flown hundreds of miles, your original two ounces of body weight have been severely reduced, and your energy levels are nearly exhausted. Finally you see your destination. It only vaguely resembles the sandy beaches you once enjoyed, but it is flat and bare so that you can lay your eggs and watch for predators. It will be your home and breeding ground for the next few months.

The endangered California Least Tern is a small bird that weighs just a few ounces, yet it flies hundreds and thousands of miles from its wintering grounds in Central Mexico and further south to its breeding grounds in California. Once it nested on California's many beaches, but we humans have driven it from those beaches, and now it is reduced to nesting in the most unlikely of places, such as runways of the Alameda Naval Air Station (ANAS). For 17 years, the only successful Northern California Least Tern colony has been located at the ANAS, and it is one of the most successful of all California Least Tern colonies.

The closing of the Alameda Naval Air Station threatens this colony. A small but powerful group of Alamedans who abhor open space and cannot see the benefits of wildlife preservation believe that the Least Tern's runways make much better sense as sites for development. After extensive efforts by Golden Gate Audubon and other environmentalists, local decision-makers in Alameda have tentatively and, in some cases grudgingly, agreed that there will some sort of a Refuge for the California Least Tern created out of part of the closing Air Station.

But, ignoring the request from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the creation of a 525-acre National Wildlife Refuge, the Alameda decision-makers proposed a Refuge so small (only 390 acres) that the Least Tern might not survive!

Many of the members of the Alameda Reuse and Redevelopment Authority, the local decision-makers, are still opposed to the Refuge. When high-level U. S. Department of Interior officials visited the Air Station, we believe a strong effort was made to convince them that a Refuge is unnecessary or at least should not be larger than 390 acres.

We are afraid that these Interior Department officials may take the Refuge decision-making process out of the hands of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where it belongs, and instead make a determination themselves. Theirs will be a decision based on politics rather than science.

The California Least Tern needs your help!

Seven of the most prestigious California Least Tern scientists have written a letter stating that any change of use in the western part of the Air Station could put the Station's California Least Tern colony at risk. Because this colony is so important, these scientists state that the loss of this colony could threaten the survival of the entire species.

The west end of the Air Station is about 700 acres. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 525 acre request is already a compromise reached with Alameda officials. A 390-acre Refuge has no biological validity and could mean doom for the Tern.

What can you do? Please write:

Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street
Washington, D.C. 20240

Tell Secretary Babbitt that the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge is important to you, to our Community and to the California Least Tern. Tell him that you want a Refuge that is at least 525 acres in size. You might want to mention the letter from the seven California Least Tern scientists.

Above all, write! Your letter need only

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"Where have all my birds gone?" asked my neighbor. With both of us feeding birds on our back yard decks, we had a multitude of flying friends chowing down a feeder full of seeds every day, along with suet and sunflower seeds. Many of our wintering birds nest elsewhere (Golden-crowned, Fox, White-throated and some White-crowned sparrows, Hermit Thrush, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, to name a few). "Our" nesting birds are courting, pairing up and picking out real estate. Since there's more natural food they are not as obvious as our winter hungry hoards.

These thoughts reminded me that Dick built and placed a bluebird nesting box at Bodega Bay. Since we're on a golf course, bluebirds are plentiful in the open spaces. I'm dying to see if someone has claimed the box and hoping the swallows didn't move in first. When we were there in February and March we observed a male using the top of the box as a perch from which to spot insects. In reading about bluebirds, there is much more information about Eastern than Western. Since they are so closely related, I'm going to assume that most facts are true for both. E.g., E. Bluebirds raise several broods--so if I miss the first family, hopefully I'll have a second chance.

Female bluebirds play quite hard-to-get, giving a prospective male a test to prove his worth as a mate. Coquettishly, she ignores his beaks full of nesting materials, then takes cursory trips to possible housing sites, tolerates his preening of her before finally succumbing to his persuasive posturing and singing. Ultimately she follows him into their nesting choice (SHE picks, of course). Nest building begins with a loose network of twigs and weeds and is finally lined with fine grasses. This is the time they must be wary of intruders. If the hole is specifically between 1 7/16 th and 1 1/2 inches the aggressive, pesky starlings cannot enter. However, the House Sparrow and the tiny but feisty House Wren can, and will destroy bluebird eggs and drive away the adults. Violet-green

Swallows defer more easily.

Once the 3-8 eggs are laid, one at a time, incubation by the female begins; the male provides his mate with insects. He also defends his territory and joins his mate at night inside the box. The eggs hatch at the same time and the young are fed only soft insects at first--the male offers them to the female, who then feeds the young. Later, both parents deliver tougher food such as crickets, grasshoppers and beetles. At first they enter the box with food; later on they just deliver the food to the opening as they hang onto the rim. When the chicks are a week old the female moves into a box to build her next nest for her second family, leaving Dad to take over full time. Sometimes other bluebirds will help with feeding, mostly siblings from a previous brood, but occasionally outsider bluebirds will join in. This spirit of cooperation has been observed in several species. It seems that such altruism arises when there is a shortage of nesting sites and cooperation helps the species as a whole. Bluebirds are one species whose habitat loss is the result of human intrusion. They prefer cavities in dead trees or in wooden fence posts, but dead trees are most often removed from populated areas and steel posts have replaced wooden ones. Luckily bluebirds will use man-made nesting boxes. Bluebird populations have also been affected by the decimation of insects with insecticides and by the success of the more aggressive starlings which usurp nesting sites and also gobble up the same foods bluebirds enjoy. In the eastern U. S., bluebirds winter over and depend on holly berries to a large extent to sustain them. As holly is harvested for Christmas decor, the birds must rely on our planting berries in our yards.

On the 18th day, Eastern Bluebirds leave their nest. For some reason, cavity-nesting birds emerge fully able to fly. (Think of Wood Ducks, nuthatches, some woodpeckers). This is unlike another member of the thrush family, the Robin, whose babies exercise their wings for days and still end up dropping to the ground

like a rock. There they are, completely helpless, worrying the parent birds, seeming to be completely mystified by their inability to fly. This is the time well-meaning people scoop them up, not knowing that the parents are nearby. It's best to place the baby bird above ground out of the possible clutches of a cat or dog. The baby will learn fairly quickly to feed itself and fly. Our nesting box is next to a large Pride of Madeira bush which should appeal to the young bluebirds for cover and for the food buzzing around the blossoms.

Bluebirds are among the best known and the most beloved of North American birds. Both Western and Eastern are gorgeous. In indirect light they appear drab, but when their feathers catch the light, they are breathtaking: cobalt blue with rusty-red breasts. They often hover as they "hawk" for insects. It is common for a bluebird to pick a perch (fence post, oak limb, roof eave) from which to watch for insects, dropping down to pluck the food before returning to the same perch. You can spend much joyous time watching these beautiful birds. I'm hoping a family has moved in by us.

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be one paragraph, the message: "Dear Secretary Babbitt, the California Least Tern needs, and the citizens of the Bay Area want, a 525-acre Alameda National Wildlife Refuge and nothing smaller will do."

The Terns will thank you for your help.

Arthur Feinstein

Galapagos -- Last Chance

Deadline for sign-up for the Galapagos and Ecuador tour in November, 1996, is June 30. There are still a couple of places remaining, so if you have an interest in visiting this "laboratory" of evolution, where the wildlife literally gathers at your feet, call the GGAS office now and commit yourself to the trip of a lifetime.

Back Yard Balcony Birders

We are bird-watchers. Some would even call us bird fanatics. We took a year's "sabbatical" (Oct. '94 - Sept. '95) to travel, and we picked the countries we visited mainly because of the varied and colorful bird species that lived there. We saw literally hundreds of life birds in our explorations of Australia, New Zealand, Guatemala, Belize and Mexico. In Australia, we confirmed that Kookaburras do in fact laugh, in New Zealand we



watched penguins feed their young, and in Mexico we marveled at thousands of American Flamingos sifting estuarine sediments through their bills with upside-down heads. Little did we know that one of our most endearing bird-watching experiences would have to wait until we returned home to Oakland. We live in a condominium in a residential area between the Rose Garden and Lake Merritt. Our north-facing balcony overlooks the neighboring backyards, a large Monterey pine tree, and a black locust tree.

Bird-watching, like Christmas, can be full of wonder, and you never know what surprise you'll unwrap in that bright little package that shows up under your tree. On the day after Christmas, 1995, we noticed an **Anna's Hummingbird** building a nest in the black locust tree outside of our window. We were making "productive use" of our time as fur-loughed government employees by painting our condo, and watching the female hummingbird carrying nesting material was a good excuse for a break.

Work intervened, and it wasn't until February 1, 1996 that we again noticed the Anna's Hummingbird, this time

sitting on a nest which we assumed contained eggs. The nest was a minute cup, about the diameter of a silver dollar. It was tightly woven of plant materials, bound together with spider webs, and camouflaged on the outside with lichen flakes. It was firmly attached to the upper side of a twig at the narrow end of a long branch. Leaves from an overhanging branch provided protection over the nest - surely this was no accident considering the rainstorms that came in February. The nest was at about the same level as our third-floor balcony, and so we became incorrigible voyeurs.

It wasn't until February 10 that we "met" the entire family, and for the next ten days we were captivated by their activities. The nest contained two tiny baby birds, helpless and naked, except for a few pin feathers. In fact they looked so lifeless that at first we thought they were dead. Lucky for them and us, they were very much alive (and probably less than a week old). Hummingbirds are promiscuous, meaning that the male mates with many females, leaving each one soon after copulation. The female is left to build the nest, incubate the eggs, and feed the young by herself. By February 13, the young were sitting up in the nest and noticeably bigger. By February 16, they were fully feathered, and in fact looked just like miniature hummingbirds except for one thing - their bills were unbelievably dinky (about one-fourth the length of the adult's bill) I soon saw why - the better to feed them with. I watched in amazement as the female made numerous trips back and forth, sipping nectar from flowers around the yard, and alighting on the nest edge where she would disgorge her food into the short gaping beak and gullet of her young. She was feeding her growing family as often as every ten minutes. Hummingbirds are amazingly fearless for their size. Whenever one of the squirrels (who had a nest in the adjacent Monterey pine tree) came close to the base of the hummingbird nest-tree, even though it was 25 feet below the actual nest, the female hummingbird would swoop, dive, and scold the squirrel until it became irritated and left.

It seemed like our balcony was the set for a wildlife documentary. We shot a roll of film with our camera. We gave "hummingbird tours" to the condo manager, neighbors, and the paper deliverer. The hummingbirds usually cooperated by giving at least one feeding. The young were growing fast, grooming their feathers, and becoming noticeably more active. On February 19, one of the young stood on the edge of the nest, flapped its wings, and hovered for a few seconds in a helicopter-like maneuver above its nest. The next day, another of the numerous February rainstorms pounded the Bay Area, and we apprehensively checked to see how the hummingbirds were doing. The young sat huddled in the nest, apparently dry, the overhanging branches keeping out most of the rain. Interestingly, even during the several rainstorms that occurred during "our watch", the female left the young unattended (except for short feeding bouts) during the day. Only at dusk did we glimpse her squeezed into the now overcrowded nest.

On February 21 we returned home from work and discovered the nest empty. We optimistically assumed that the young had successfully fledged, but really had no way of knowing. We didn't expect to see them again.

The nest was at about the same level as our third-floor balcony, and so we became incorrigible voyeurs.

Although being hummingbird "midwives" is our most exciting condo birding adventure, we have kept a yard list (now at 36 species) during the seven years we've lived here. One of our more unusual sightings was finding three Mallards calmly paddling back and forth in the swimming pool one hot June Saturday. They had the pool to themselves. Since the "Festival at the Lake" was occurring at Lake Merritt, our working hypothesis is that they had flown to calmer waters to escape the crowd. Nor are the hummingbirds the only nuptial newsworthy items to report. In

(continued on page 53)

The beginning of April saw the first real arrival of migrant warblers and flycatchers to our area, with species such as Black-throated Gray, McGillivray's and Nashville warblers all showing up in small numbers. By the end of the month most of the expected migrants were well in evidence throughout the area.

The end of the month also saw another huge influx of Red Phalaropes to the coast and many interior locations, with thousands of birds present. Other interesting migrant shorebirds appeared and seawatching also provided some of the most interesting and exciting highlights for April

Loons to Ducks

We begin this month with a report of large numbers of loons seen passing Pigeon Point, SM, on April 20 (BS). Estimates for the day included totals of approx. 15,100 Pacific and 653 Common loons. In Pacifica, SM, the Red-necked Grebe found at the end of last month remained through April 2 (GD), with another present in Alameda, at the Willie Stargill Field, on April 14 (HG). At Point Arena, MEN, the Laysan Albatross continued to be seen with the last report coming on April 12 (TN), about 3 weeks later than it remained of this location last winter.

Tubenose highlights this month include; 125 Black-footed Albatross, 1 Laysan Albatross, 3 Short-tailed, 3 Flesh-footed and 7 Pink-footed shearwaters on Monterey Bay, April 5 (DLSh), while diligent land-based seawatchers from Pigeon Point recorded 2 Black-footed Albatross, on April 10, good numbers of Sooty Shearwaters and scattered Northern Fulmars throughout the month.

Of local interest are the nesting Great Blue Herons at Stow Lake, GGP, in San Francisco, with at least 2 pairs breeding there again this year. The overwintering Ross's Goose was still present at the Sunnyvale Sewer Ponds, SCL, through April 21 (PJM). A courting pair of Eurasian Wigeon was

present at the Crittendon Marsh, SCL, on April 22, with another found April 4, at the San Felipe Lake, SBT (SRo).

A pair of Oldsquaw continued at the mouth of Pescadero Creek, SM, through April 27; another was at Crown Beach, ALA, on April 14 (HG); and two were in Richmond Harbor, CC, on April 27 (KHi). A male Tufted Duck was found in Sonoma County, near Petaluma, on April 17 (DN), and a pair of Harlequin Duck were also present on Monterey Bay on April 5 (DLSh).

Shorebirds to Skimmers

Pacific Golden-Plover remained at the Spaletta Plateau at Point Reyes NS, at least through April 29 with 5 birds present on that date. Another single bird was at the Moonglow Dairy, MTY, on April 18 (TN). Other shorebird highlights for this month included another huge invasion of Red Phalaropes at the end of the month. Birds were recorded off most coastal counties and in numbers even greater than those recorded over the Christmas period. High estimates included over 10,000 birds off Moss Landing, MTY, on April 27, and up to 8000 birds off the San Mateo Coast during the same period. An alternate-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper was at the Rush Creek Ponds, Novato, MRN, on April 29 (RS). The female Ruff continued at the Crittendon Marsh, SM until April 21, while a male, showing traces of alternate plumage, was at the Arzino Ranch in Alviso, SCL, on April 17 (PJM). Single Baird's and Pectoral sandpipers were recorded at the Woodland Trestle Ponds, Yolo, on April 17 (TE). Solitary Sandpipers, uncommon but regular spring migrants in our region, were at Bolinas Lagoon, April 24 (RS); near Fremont, ALA, on April 27 (BR); and at Pilarcitos Creek, SM, on April 28 (RSTh). A first-year **Common Black-Headed Gull** was well seen on the water and flying off Pigeon Point, SM, on April 20 (RSTh) before moving off to the south.

An incredible 120 Sabines Gulls,

most in alternate plumage, were also seen off Pigeon Point on April 29 (RSTh), in addition to a remarkable 81 Common Terns that same day. Three early Arctic Terns were on Monterey Bay on April 5 (DLSh).

Another interesting breeding note is of Heerman's Gulls, which returned to breed on Ano Nuevo Island, SM, for the third consecutive year. A Black Skimmer was at Moss Landing, MTY, on April 27 and may be headed to the San Francisco Bay area where this species has bred the last few years.

Hummingbirds to Flycatchers

Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported at expected locations, such as Piper Slough, CC, and Del Puerto Canyon, STA, during the month. Costa's Hummingbirds were also in evidence in locations such as Del Puerto Canyon Road, STA, and Donner Canyon, CC. Interesting Calliope Hummingbird reports include one at a feeder in Glen Ellen, SON, April 11 (KH), and a pair at Tilden Regional Park, CC, on April 18 (LC).

The long-staying Dusky-capped Flycatcher continued to be reported up until April 27 at the Moonglow Dairy, MTY. Meanwhile, Hammond's Flycatcher numbers have been less than reported in previous years with most coming from Mitchell Canyon, CC, from April 9 onwards, and a high count of 5 birds. In San Mateo County, where this bird is a rare spring migrant, there were 2 separate reports of single birds during the month, April 17 and April 26 (PJM, RSTh). An irregular migrant in our area was a Gray Flycatcher found at Piper Slough, CC, on April 29 (JM). Of note for not being reported is Dusky Flycatcher which is usually seen in small numbers during this time of year.

Warblers to Grackles

The first week of the month saw the first real arrivals of migrant warblers such as Nashville, McGillivray's and Black-throated Gray warblers.

Interesting lingerers included the Worm-eating Warbler in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, which was present until April 2, and the Chestnut-sided Warbler, which overwintered in Monterey and was last seen April 8 (SRo). In addition, a Palm Warbler was at the Mendoza Ranch on April 9 (CC), while a Black-and-White Warbler was found on Gazos Creek, SM, again on April 9 (BS).

Sparrow reports included good numbers of Sage, Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned sparrows at various locations including Mount Diablo and Donner Canyon, CC, and Del Puerto Canyon, STA, throughout the month. At the summit of Sierra Road, SCL, the overwintering female Chestnut-collared Longspur was last observed on April 5. Finally this month, a Great-tailed Grackle was reported at the Lafayette Reservoir, CC, on April 19 (KF).

The monthly observation column is generated from reports made to the Northern California Bird Box or to the author. Some sightings are unconfirmed and numbers of birds are often best regarded as estimates or "best guesses". In general, birds in boldface are very rare in our region, geographically or seasonally. Many of these are currently reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Observers are encouraged to provide written and/or photographic documentation to the CBRC, c/o Michael Patten, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959 for any species currently on the review list. A list of review species can also be obtained from the CBRC secretary at the address above.

This data is made possible by all the observers who contributed their reports to the Northern California Bird Box.

Abbreviations for observers: LC: Lewis Cooper; CC: Chris Corbin; GD: Gary Deighi; TE: Todd Easterla; HG: Hugh Garvey; KH: Keith Hansen; KHi: Kevin Hintsa; PJM: Peter J Metropulos; JM: Joe Morlan; DN: Dan Nelson; TN: Todd Newberry; BR: Bob Reiling; SRo: Steve Rovell; BS: Barry Saupe; DLSh: Debra L Shearwater; RS: Rich Stallcup; RSTh: Ron Thorn.

Abbreviations for counties; ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; FRE, Fresno; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MTY, Monterey; PLA, Placer; SBT, San Benito; SF, San Francisco; SIS, Sisqiyu; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SON, Sonoma; STA, Stanislaus; YOL, Yolo.

Internet Web-Site Set-Up Request

In this, the age of high technology and "net surfing," GGAS is looking to keep up with ongoing trends and is seeking to develop a Web-Site on the Internet. Due to our limited knowledge of this technology and languaging format we are looking to find someone who may be interested in developing and maintaining, (or help train somebody to maintain) a Web-Site for us. Anyone who may be interested in this challenge is requested to contact Hugh Cotter at (415)- 752- 6776, (eve.) to discuss.

New Wetland at Point Reyes

The winter rains and the breaking of an old levy produced a flooded field along the west side Hwy. 1, just south of the town of Pt. Reyes Station and north of the Olema Campground, that quickly became the home to large numbers of dabbling ducks and other water birds. In late March, there were lots of Wood Ducks (28 one afternoon), along with numerous wigeon including one Eurasian, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Canada Geese, and even a couple of Mandarin Ducks, in place undoubtedly to invite comparison with the Wood Ducks.

The fortuitous flooding temporarily evicted the normally-resident grazing cows. This stretch of land belongs to the National Seashore whose naturalists have shown interest in maintaining the area for wildlife, rather than having it used solely as grazing land. This might mean grazing during part of the year to keep grass height down, but then moving the cattle at other times when the area might be used more beneficially by wildlife.

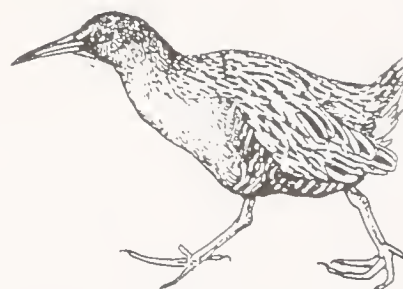
It is always helpful in situations like this to show support for policies that favor increased habitat for wild species. A brief note to Don Neubacher, Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956, saying that you favor managing this area for wildlife, would be greatly appreciated.

Back Yard Balcony Birders (continued)

April, 1992, a pair of Mourning Doves nested in a flower box on our neighbor's balcony. Unlike hummingbirds, both male and female Mourning Doves share incubation duties and care for the young. Our neighbor Bob, although not a birdwatcher, became quite the doting dove data-taker, discovering that the "change-over" between male and female nest-sitters would occur every day between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m. I found that this had also been reported by some scientist with a Ph.D. Bob also conducted his own experiments and reported that when he watered the plants in the flower box, the incubating bird would sometimes fly away, but would always return. Apparently the watering schedule and the "Mourning Dove tours" Bob conducted for interested neighbors didn't upset the birds too much, as they successfully fledged one young (of the two eggs laid).

This morning, March 19, I walked out on our balcony to see if I could find the remnants of the hummingbird nest in the black locust tree. It had been almost two months since we'd seen the family. I was not entirely surprised to hear the familiar staccato chattering of an Anna's Hummingbird, as individual hummingbirds frequent the flowers and feeders in our "backyard". But I did stare in wonder as three hummingbirds flew around the balcony and darted into the branches which still held the now-empty nest. One of the hummingbirds (I could tell it was a female by the red throat feathers) even landed for a second on the twig that held the nest. I could identify the other two hummingbirds as juveniles by the dusky-colored streaks on their throats. Was it "our" hummingbird family coming back to check out the old neighborhood? We'll never know. But it's a comforting thought.

Joelle Buffa and Clyde Morris



Field Trips Calendar

Friday-Sunday, May 31-June 2

Birding by Ear in Yosemite

The lower and middle elevations of Yosemite National Park are alive with singing birds in early June. A variety of habitats support a rich diversity of birdlife, typically including seven flycatchers (four Empidonax), three vireos, seven warblers, and many other species in full song and breeding plumage.

Meet at the Big Oak Flat entrance on Friday, May 31 at 3 p.m., and on Saturday, June 1 at 7 a.m. (If you arrive later Saturday morning, meet the group in Hodgdon Meadow behind the Hodgdon Meadow Group Campsites.) The meeting place is the large parking lot 100 yards inside the park entrance on Hwy. 120 (30 miles from Yosemite Valley).

Nearby campgrounds include Hodgdon Meadow (reservations required) and Crane Flat in the Park, Carlon and Middle Fork (primitive Forest Service campgrounds) on the road to Hetch Hetchy, and Sweetwater on Hwy. 120.

Lodging on Hwy. 120 includes Yosemite Gatehouse (209) 379-2260, Evergreen Lodge (209) 379-2606, Lee's Middle Fork (209) 962-7408 and Buck Meadows Lodge (209) 962-6366.

Bring warm clothes, raingear, rubber boots (wet meadows), be prepared to pack a lunch and walk about six miles. Leader: Dave Cornman (510) 825-2106. \$

Wednesday, June 12

Mini-otrip to Redwood Regional Park

Meet in the park at 9:30 a.m. Take the Warren Freeway (Hwy. 13), exit onto Redwood Rd. and proceed east about three miles to Redwood Gate, southern entrance to the park. Meet just inside small parking lot on the left. We should see Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Bullock's Oriole, Solitary, Hutton's and Warbling vireos. Bring lunch. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301, and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Saturday-Sunday, June 15-16

Yuba Pass and vicinity

On Saturday, meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Yuba Pass Summit parking area (Hwy. 49), 15 miles east of Sierra City. Take I-80 to Truckee, go north on Hwy. 89 to Sierraville, and take Hwy. 49 west to Yuba Summit. (Or take Hwy. 49 northeast from Auburn for a slower but more scenic route.) We will bird the mountain areas for summer residents, including dippers, flycatchers, warblers and Calliope Hummingbirds.

On Sunday, meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 49 and 89 (by the saw mill), about 1 mile north of Sattley. We will caravan to Sierra Valley looking for birds of the eastern Sierra, including White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Sage Thrashers, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Camping is available at the following U.S. Forest Service campgrounds off Hwy. 49: Wild Plum (elev. 3300'), 2 mi. east of Sierra City; and Chapman Creek (elev. 5800'), 8 mi. east of Sierra City. Lodging is available at Sierra City: Sierra Chalet,

(916) 862-1110; Buttes Motel, (916) 862-1170; Herrington's Sierra Pines, (916) 862-1151; Basset Station Motel, (916) 862-1297; Sierra Buttes Inn Motel, (916) 862-1191; and Yuba River Inn, (916) 862-1122. Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. (*)

Friday-Sunday, June 21-23

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Join the Murphy family on the annual GGAS family camping excursion to Lassen. In past years we have seen Willow, Hammond's, and Dusky flycatchers, Black Swift, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Calliope Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and most of the warblers and finches that breed in the mountains. The more serious birders will meet at the Manzanita Lake Campground store at 6:30 a.m. on Friday and again on Sunday. We will bird around the lake for 2-3 hours, return to camp for a quick breakfast, then rendezvous again at the store at 10:30 a.m. for another outing. The Friday outing will be a leisurely hike of about 3 miles on one of Lassen's beautiful trails. (We may climb as much as 700 ft.) Wear sturdy shoes, and bring lunch and liquids. Suntan lotion, a hat, mosquito repellant and warm clothing may also be necessary.

Saturday is a special day for everyone. We will meet by the camp store at 7:30 a.m. caravan north to Burney Falls, Fall River Valley and Baum Lake. Bring lunch and liquids. This all-day excursion of about 100 miles will include a 2-or 3-hour swim at Lake Britton, while watching for Bald Eagles. (If you forget your swimsuit, the trials at Burney Park offer a wonderful diversion, and fishermen can try their luck in some of northern California's finest trout streams.)

Since this is a long and tiring day, we suggest a get-together for dinner at a nearby restaurant instead of returning to the camp-stove. Stop by our campsite for further information. We will have a campfire every evening beginning at 8 p.m. Bring your own chair (and cup of wine if you choose). We will provide hot water for tea or coffee. Check the campground bulletin boards or the office at Hat Creek Resort for our poster, campsite number, and any last minute changes in the schedule.

For the Sunday outing we will meet at 10:30 a.m. to drive through the park, making frequent stops for birding. We should reach the south entrance around 1 p.m., depending on how long we play in the snow at the summit. For this final event, bring warm gloves, a plastic trash bag for a mini-tobaggon and a camera.

From the Bay Area drive north on I-5 to its junction with Hwy. 44 in Redding. Go east on Hwy. 44 to the northwest entrance of Lassen. Camping facilities are available at Manzanita Lake. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of the park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station (916) 335-7121. Other information can be obtained from the park headquarters at Mineral, CA 96063.

Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy (415) 564-0074. \$ (*)

Saturday-Sunday, July 27-28

Yosemite Alpine Ecology

While the snow-pack is not as heavy this year as last, the specific destinations of our daily hikes in the Yosemite area will not be determined until shortly before the time of our trip. Wherever we finally go, the scenery should be beautiful and hopefully there will be plenty of wildflowers and some interesting birds.

Since this is a popular trip, participation will be **by reservation only**, and the number of participants will be strictly limited. If you are interested, please call George Peyton as soon as possible.

As usual, this is not primarily a birding trip, but will emphasize general alpine ecology. All participants should be in good physical condition, with reasonable experience in hiking and climbing at elevations of 8,000 to 11,000 feet, which is where we will be. Participants should bring a lunch and ample liquids each day, along with a hat, water-repellent jacket, sun lotion, mosquito repellent, and good walking shoes or boots with treaded soles (no smooth-soled tennis or similar shoes, please). We may possibly traverse some snow fields after the heavy winter snows in the Sierra.

County and Forest Service campgrounds are located between Tioga Pass and Lee Vining off Hwy. 120 (4 to 6 miles west of Hwy. 395), as well as Tuolumne Meadows Campground in Yosemite. Motels in Lee Vining include Best Western Lakeview Lodge (619) 647-6543, Gateway Motel (619) 647-6467, and Murphey's Motel (619) 647-6316. For trip reservations and meeting details, call leader: George Peyton (510) 444-3131 (weekdays). \$ (*)

Thursday-Sunday, August 22-25

Backpacking trip in Lassen Volcanic National Park

Leaders: David Rice and Robin Pulich

We will backpack in three miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see flocks of mixed warblers and other songbirds that summer in Lassen, plus resident birds of the mountains, Bald Eagles, and perhaps some migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000ft. elevation in beautiful country!

To avoid impact in fragile habitat, this

trip is limited to twelve people. Everyone will be responsible for his/her own gear and food, although some cooperative or shared meals may be arranged. For details call David Rice (510) 527-7210 \$ (*).

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*). See below.

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chair (510) 524-2399.

Field Trips Coordinator

Are there places you've always wanted to explore, but didn't want to attempt on your own? Places that you can't get to without benefit of an organized expedition? Yellow-billed Cuckoos on the Kern River? Rock Sandpipers on the Arcata jetty? Backstage at Marine World? Bird rescue and rehab in action?

Now's your chance to make it happen.

Every year, Golden Gate Audubon offers approximately 75 field trips to various points of interest around the Bay Area and throughout Northern California. Total attendance is over 1000 people. It's a tremendous service and there are crowds out there hungry for more of the same and more of the different.

Russ Wilson has been our dedicated field trips coordinator for nearly 10 years now. He's kept our veteran trip leaders coming back again and again; he's recruited new leaders; he's added some very successful new trips; he writes directions so clear that a map almost seems pointless. And after 10 years, he's had enough and would like to pass along the torch.

Surely there's a soul (or souls -- this is ideal for job sharing) out there who recognizes service and potential all wrapped up in one. Russ will gladly work with his replacement, providing advice and guidance as long as necessary. If you have questions or are interested, call Russ at (510) 524-2399 or the GGAS office at (510) 843-2222.

Panama Committee News

The next meeting of the Panama Committee will be on Monday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. We hope to have a special guest, Borja Mila, who, through PRBO, has been working in Panama, Mexico, and other Latin American countries. A fluent Spanish speaker, he trains the local people to do field research, and will share with us his hands-on experiences. Call Miles McKey at (510) 652-5854 for directions and details. All are welcome.

April Birdathon

The Panama Committee team rustled up 102 species on Saturday, April 27, in Alameda and Marin counties. It's not too late to make a donation -- send your check made out to GGAS to the GGAS office and indicate this is for the Panama Committee birdathon team. Funds will be used for furthering our partnership with Panama Audubon, as well as for GGAS educational activities. Many thanks to all who participated.

1997 Panama Trip

Plans for the February 1997 trip are solidifying. We'll spend the last two weeks of February with expert local guides seeing hundreds of tropical species. First we'll travel through the Canal Zone to the marshes and forests north from Panama City to Colon. Then the group will fly west to David and the rainforests bordering Costa Rica where the Resplendent Quetzals are found. Finally, we're off to the jungle of the Darien Province near the Colombian border for several days in the tropical forest looking for species that are seen nowhere else in Panama. The itinerary is such that you can join the group for one week or two, and there will be special opportunities to meet members of the Panama Audubon Society. Learn more about the trip at our June 10th meeting.

Binoculars Needed

Panama Audubon needs more binoculars to carry out their conservation education program. We have been able to give them several pairs in the past, and, thanks to the generous help of a volunteer repairman, even those binoculars needing repair can be put to use. Call the GGAS office (510-843-2222) and make an appointment to drop off your old tax-deductible binoculars.

Breeding Bird Atlas -- Some Initial Data

The Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas is now in Year 4 of its five-year survey of the breeding birds of the county. The protocol, as with other breeding bird atlas projects across the country, has been to divide the county into a grid of 5 km.-by-5 km. squares, with each square censused by an individual or team during the breeding season, generally mid-March to late June, but earlier for some species such as Anna's Hummingbird and later for others like American Goldfinch. The goal is to confirm nesting for all species deemed likely in each block, a list arrived at mainly by studying habitat and historical nesting records and adding in a measure of common sense and intuition.

By California standards, Alameda County is small to medium-sized, but it appears vast when trying to organize a breeding bird atlas, stretching from the Bay nearly to I-5 and from Albany to Fremont, encompassing a wide variety of habitats, many with access problems. At this point, there has been good coverage of most areas in the western part of the county, but some of the blocks in the south-central and eastern county that require major time commitments, not to mention physical stamina, still remain to be censused thoroughly.

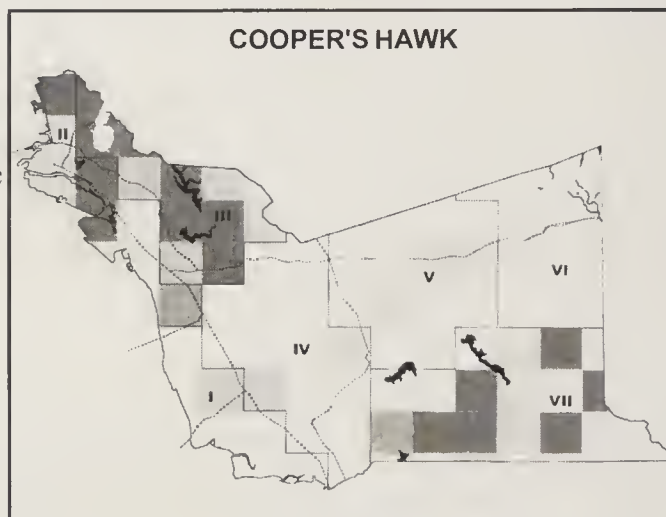
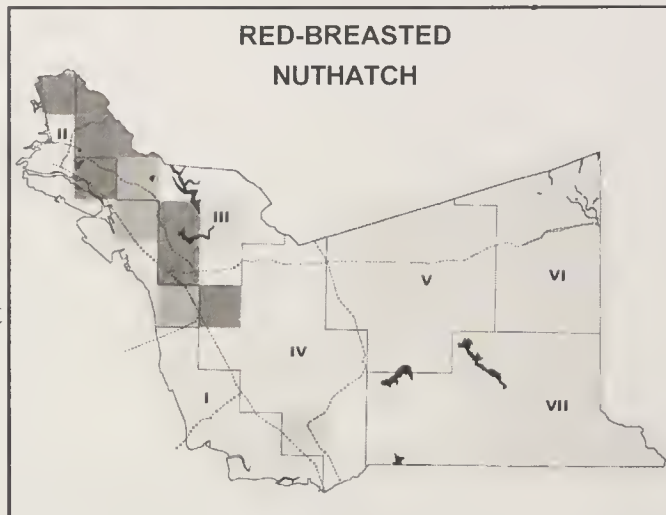
The maps here, created by Rusty Scalf using up-to-the-minute computer software, show the current nesting status of a couple of very different species, Cooper's Hawk and Red-breasted Nuthatch. The nuthatch, which feeds on pine-nuts and small insects gleaned from the bark of trees, prefers the cooler coniferous woodlands of the east bay hills; the Cooper's Hawk, feeding on small birds and mammals, nests in the upper canopy of extensive woodlands, generally oak, but also riparian.

It should be remembered that these maps show evidence of nesting, not actual numbers, so although it appears that Cooper's Hawks nest extensively in Alameda County, their actual numbers are quite small. Censusors have been asked to estimate the number of nests for each species in their area, but this is often a judgement call based on the number of birds observed; the primary object is to confirm that a species is nesting in the block and then move on to other species, not to confirm each and every nest.

DARK GRAY = nesting has been confirmed

MEDIUM GRAY = nesting is probable

LIGHT GRAY = nesting is possible



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Standing Committee Chairs

Education: Debey Zito (415) 648-6861
Field Trips: Russ Wilson

(510) 524-2399

Finance: Steven Margolin

(510) 654-6295

Conservation:

(510) 843-2222

Development:

Hospitality:

Membership: Barbara Rivenes

(415) 388-4552

Program: Terry Schmidt (415) 282-0261

Publicity: Carol Hanson

GULL Editor: Ann Dewart

(510) 763-3010

Observations: Hugh Cotter

(415) 752-6776

Librarian: Janet Wessel (510) 939-2499

Program Coordinator/Office Manager:

Arthur Feinstein (510) 843-2222

Northern California Bird Box
(510) 524-5592

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Golden Gate Audubon Society
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 Berkeley, California 94702
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Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue
Suite G
Berkeley, California 94702
Phone: (510) 843-2222
Fax: (510) 843-5351

Office Hours:
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